

RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
MINUTES
January 27, 2003

Crowne Plaza Hotel
2532 W. Peoria Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Frances Werner, William Branan, John Neal, Mary Dahl, Glen Collins, Rick Holloway, Lee Aitken, Sanford Cohen, Edwin Lamar Smith, Sandee McCullen, Steve Saway, Norm Wallen

ABSENT: Chris Newell, Hector Ruedas, Lorraine Eiler

BLM STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Elaine Zielinski, Deborah Stevens, Michael Brown, Don Ellsworth, Mike Taylor, Steve Gobat, Judy Nelson, Carl Rountree, Keith Curry, MarLynn Spears, Tom Zale, Wayne King, Don Charpio, Shela McFarlin, Al Burch, John Christensen, Susan Williams

PRESENTERS & GUESTS: Bruce Raden, Tammy Pike, Charles Lange

AGENDA ITEM: Meeting called to Order (Frances Werner, RAC Chairperson)
Welcome and Introduction of RAC Members.

DISCUSSION: The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. on the morning of January 27, 2003 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Frances thanked everyone for attending. Greetings and introductions were then made around the room.

AGENDA ITEM: Review October 2, 2002 and November 20, 2002 meeting minutes.

DISCUSSION: Changes to the October 2002 minutes: Add Steve Saway's name in attendance. Page 3 comment by Norm Wallen should read Land Appraisals should be based on what the lands really are worth and not simply by how much lands in the area are being sold for. Page 34, Public Relations Working Group special items to highlight give to Steve Saway (not Norm Wallen); page 36, Planning efforts Sonoran Desert National Monument add Steve Saway's name; page 36, middle of the page Greg Simmons said once scoping reports are approved (not improved).

ACTION: October and November minutes were approved and seconded by the RAC. Moved by Mr. Smith and seconded by Glen Collins. November minutes moved by Sandee McCullen and seconded by Rick Holloway.

AGENDA ITEM: BLM State Director's Introduction, Update on Legislation, Regulations, and other Statewide Issues. (Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director and other BLM staff.)

- **Acting Associate State Director:** Carl Rountree has been on a two-month detail in the Washington Office as the Chief of Planning and Environmental Coordinator. He will be returning in February. During his absence, Bonnie Hogan and Judy Nelson have acted in his position. Bonnie is a special assistant to BLM Deputy Director Fran Cherry in

Washington, and Judy is a Resource Group Manager from the BLM Oregon/Washington State Office. They have been very helpful in Carl's absence and have gained some valuable experience.

- **BLM Phoenix Field Office Manager Named:** Teri Raml has been selected as the new Phoenix Field manager. Teri is currently the Klamath Falls Resource Area manager in Oregon. She began her federal career as a cooperative student with the U.S. Forest Service, and worked as a wildlife biologist in several forests in Colorado, South Dakota and Virginia. In addition, she worked in Washington for the Forest Service and also on Senator Daschle's staff under a legislative fellows program. Teri will be starting on March 9.

- **New Rangeland Management Initiative "Sustaining Working Landscapes":** The Secretary has asked the BLM to develop a policy based on a stewardship program consistent with the Secretary's Four C's (*Conservation through Consultation, Communication and Cooperation*). Implementation of the Secretary's Four C's are intended to address sustainable ranching and citizen-based stewardship on federal lands to allow for rangeland restoration. Any proposed changes in the regulations will be published in the Federal Register. The BLM will consider the following options for sustaining working landscapes.

- Citizen Stewardship Contracts
- Reserve Common Allotments (RCA's)
- Voluntary Allotment Restructuring
- Endangered Species Mitigation
- Conservation Easements

- **Border Task Force Meeting:** The Borderland Management Task Force will hold its second meeting on February 6 at the Hampton Inn and Suites, 5950 N. Oracle Road, Tucson. The first meeting was held on September 25, 2002.

The Task Force was established to identify and implement ways to reduce deaths of undocumented immigrants crossing Federal lands in southern Arizona and reduce impacts to natural and cultural resources.

The Task Force is made up of Park Superintendents, Wildlife Refuge Managers, BLM Field Office Managers, U.S. Forest Service District Rangers, U.S. Border Patrol Agents, Tohono O'odham Nation representatives, agency law enforcement personnel, and is supported by the Southwest Strategy.

- **Civil Homeland Defense/Tombstone Militia Media Coverage:** Members of Civil Homeland Defense, a local volunteer group, have been inviting high profile media (CNN, Fox News, HBO, etc.) out to lands along the border to witness first-hand issues associated with undocumented immigrants crossing into the United States from Mexico. This group is concerned about the environmental impacts of the immigration and smuggling situation.

To date, BLM has not talked to any reporters or media. However, the potential exists for the media to also focus on BLM's management of these areas.

- **AP Reporter Interest on Border Issues:** During a conference in Boise, Idaho, I met Angie Wagner, the new Western regional writer for Associated Press. Recently, she contacted me and is also interested in writing a story about border issues, i.e., the water stations. I have provided her with a number of contacts for her research, including members of the Border Task Force.
- **Budget Status:** BLM, along with the rest of the federal government, is still operating under a continuing resolution until January 31. BLM anticipates significant reductions because of Homeland Security, and other military and domestic issues. BLM will not have its final budget until the appropriations bill is passed.
- **Visit to BLM Safford Field Office:** I recently visited the BLM Safford Field Office and toured several areas, including the proposed Phelps Dodge mine, Discovery Park, and the Black Hills Backcountry Byway. It was an interesting and fun trip. I was honored by Mayor Van Tally, and presented with a key to the City of Safford.
- **State of Arizona Indemnity Lieu Selections:** On December 17, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management Tom Fulton presented Governor Hull with the documents transferring 15,230 acres of federal land to the State of Arizona. This transfer completes the federal obligation owed to the State under the Enabling Act. Arizona's K-12 public schools are the direct beneficiaries of this conveyance to the State. The newly designated states lands are located near Springerville and St. Johns, Arizona.

Note: Media coverage on the in lieu conveyance was not entirely accurate. Two points that were made: 1) BLM finally compensated the State for public lands owed since statehood. However, BLM has been transferring the land through several transactions over time, and the 15,230 acres were the last of the indemnity lieu compensation. An *Arizona Republic* editorial, also incorrectly stated that BLM still owes the state for 468,000 acres of state trust lands within special designated areas like the monuments. However, there are only 176,354 acres of state trust lands within these boundaries. Not until the State gets exchange authority, will BLM be able to complete the remaining transfers.

- **Fort Huachuca East Range Condemnation:** The Department of the Army has been utilizing the State Trust lands located within the East Range for over fifty years without consent or authorization from the State. The State is entitled to receive like compensation for the conveyance of 1,536 acres of State Trust fee ownership and 11,361 of State Trust mineral estate ownership.

The selected federal lands, identified by the Arizona State Land Department and approved by the State Selection Board are currently planned for disposal under the

existing Phoenix Resource Management Plan. The selected lands are also located in the same area as the Indemnity Lieu Selections near Springerville and St. Johns.

The BLM Safford Field Office staff is preparing the documentation required to complete the exchange of lands with the State. The environmental analysis is to be completed in March, with appraisals on both offered and selected lands to be finalized by May. The transfer of land should be completed by this fall.

- **Phelps Dodge Dos Pobres/San Juan Project:** The final administrative draft environmental impact statement (FEIS) on the Dos Pobres/San Juan project will be completed by the end of January. BLM Arizona will be briefing the BLM Washington staff during February in Arizona, and the Department staff in early March in Washington. The FEIS will be provided to the Washington Office for a 45-day review period. Publication and release of the FEIS is currently planned for July.
- **Coal Slurry Cleanup:** On December 31, 2002, a coal slurry spill occurred in the Black Mountains about 17 miles west of Kingman, Arizona. The spill occurred from a pipeline owned by the Black Mesa Pipeline Company. The pipeline is located along the northeast boundary of the Mount Nutt Wilderness, outside of the designated wilderness area. However, the spill ran into the wilderness area. BLM Kingman Field Office personnel investigated the situation, and have negotiated remediation with the pipeline company. The coal is being shoveled into bags, and carried out by hand, or on horseback, which is keeping within wilderness management guidelines. The clean-up operations have begun and will continue until April 1, 2003.
- **Special Recreation Permit Regulations:** This past fall, the newly rewritten Special Recreation Permit regulations were implemented. These regulations authorize private and commercial recreation-related activities on public lands. Most of the policies and procedures remained the same, but were further clarified. In addition, a few new options were introduced, including BLM's authorization to issue permits with 5-year terms, and policy allowing for cost recovery by the government for work done on the permit, i.e., environmental assessments and monitoring, etc. Washington will be conducting training on the revised regulations for all BLM recreation staff this spring and summer.
- **Use Authorizations:** A partnership between the Arizona Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the BLM is progressing well. BLM expects to have an updated Memorandum of Understanding and Operating Agreement signed and in place by May. This effort will significantly streamline the processing of major state and interstate highway rights-of-way for highway purposes.
- **Major Interstate and Intrastate Energy-Related Rights-of-Way Affecting Arizona:** BLM is currently working on five major interstate and intrastate energy projects for natural gas pipelines, power lines and natural gas storage facilities. They include: the proposed Picacho Pipeline, Red Lake Gas Storage, Navajo Transmission Project, Tucson Electric Power Line, and the Kinger-Morgan pipeline.

- **2nd RAC National Meeting in Washington, D.C.:** Another RAC meeting with the 23 RAC chairs is scheduled to take place on April 22-23. The meeting will be held in Washington D.C. and will focus on several of the recommendations offered by the chairs last November. The first recommendation that will be functional before this meeting is the RAC website. In addition, a BLM RAC Re-Charge Team will meet to develop an action plan to implement the remaining recommendations.

DISCUSSION:

Frances Werner: Do you know what the Picacho Pipeline is about?

Steve Gobat: We don't have much information on it at this time.

Mike Taylor: We can get you more information on the specifics.

Elaine Zielinski: The purpose of the training is to try to ensure consistency.

Mike Taylor: Timing is the key to this. The planning usually focuses on corridors where we identify where these types of actions can take place. We do the more detailed level of analysis as the information comes along.

Elaine Zielinski: With the Tucson Electric Power line BLM is the cooperating agency.

Mary Dahl: Our legislature is coming up with a couple of proposals regarding the borderline management issues.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Southwest Strategy Update (Michael Brown, BLM Southwest Strategy Coordinator)

PowerPoint Presentation. Our Mission is to support existing collaborative efforts, as well as encourage and facilitate new collaborative efforts as well as maintain and restore the region's cultural, economic, and environmental quality of life. This approach should be collaborative, scientifically based, legally defensible, and implemented with the current budget and staff.

The Southwest Strategy (SWS) was developed in November 1997. We are trying to improve public service to the community using Southwest Strategy as a tool. Southwest Strategy is heavy on a collaborative approach. Membership: USDA, Forest Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Department of Defense, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Justice, Arizona Tribes, New Mexico Pueblos and Tribes, Navajo Nation, State of Arizona and State of New Mexico.

The Southwest Strategy has a Regional Executive Committee consisting of Work Groups, Southwest Strategy Coordination Office and Agency Coordinators. The charter is updated annually.

DISCUSSION:

Steve Saway: In our part of the state one of the issues has been the border patrol. Maybe the Southwest Strategy can help educate the Border Patrol on what laws to enforce. Steve personally saw the border patrol using 4-wheelers in designated wilderness areas.

Mike Taylor: They put together a training video for the Border Patrol to use when they have new employees.

Sandee McCullen: We talked about the Southwest Strategy a few months ago; however, the RAC is still not involved in the Southwest Strategy. Would it not be advantageous to have RAC members involved? How do OHV people get involved?

Mike Brown: What you need to do is contact me and I will make sure you know of upcoming Southwest Strategy meeting dates and agendas.

Sandee McCullen: I think everybody here at this table has something to add to the Southwest Strategy.

Glen Collins: About four to five years ago when the Southwest Strategy was first announced the RAC was told that it was a way to get agency heads together to coordinate. It looks like another organization has been created to do a lot of things.

Elaine Zielinski: Tomorrow and Wednesday is the Southwest Strategy Retreat with the executives. What was the original intent? There are some concerns that we have created another organization and we need to make sure that we are not duplicating issues.

Rick Holloway: Sandy you mentioned that as individuals or as a RAC that this is a discussion that we need to discuss before we have a meeting.

Mike Taylor: Maybe after the SWS Retreat this week we can discuss with you on where the RAC involvement can be with Southwest Strategy.

Elaine Zielinski: I don't know a lot of the SWS history and I have never been to one of these SWS Regional Executive Meetings. We do have some concerns that we don't not to create another entity that is disconnected from the other groups. What is the value of SWS? We will be happy to report back to you after the SWS Retreat.

Sanford Cohn: I notice that when the workgroups get together and vote yes on something that they then submit their request to the sponsors for consideration. Are all the sponsors getting together and discussing the recommendations?

Mike Brown: Each fiscal year we look at funding for different projects. All of the SWS members look at the projects and often the sponsor will make the final decision on the particular item. If the workgroups feel strongly on a particular item they will develop a set of criteria.

Carl Rountree: I have never been a situation that something has come up from a group that has not been presented to the sponsor. The sponsor is more of an advisor than a go or no go position.

Mike Brown: The proposals are in tune with the charter.

Lamar Smith: It was obvious to us that a lot of the agencies had a long ways to go to understand one another.

John Neal: At what point is your authority of agencies in discontent over an issue and what is the process at that point?

Carl Rountree: Each agency operates under their existing authority. I think the original intent was to clear up how the government works. I think some of the issues being raised by Elaine is to be more policy oriented with the Southwest Strategy and get the agencies to work better together.

Frances Werner: Has the Southwest Strategy also worked on the border issues?

Mike Brown: The Taskforce group is a spin off and they report back to the SWS.

Steve Saway: The MOU talks about improving the collaboration with the government. Is there public involvement?

Mike Brown: Yes at the workgroup level. Particularly people have been attending regarding OHV issues.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Arizona Planning Updates (Steve Gobat, Planning and Environmental Coordinator) Resource management planning is the way the BLM, working with the public, decides how to manage the public lands for the future. This planning process will take a comprehensive look at the management of about 1.42 million acres of the BLM administered public lands in two areas: Sonoran Desert National Monument and Phoenix South (Public lands south of Phoenix.).

At the Agua Fria they have been doing a lot of scoping meetings and public involvement efforts. On January 29 the Agua Fria people are coming to the State Office for a briefing. Any RAC members who wish to attend are welcome.

The major issues are OHV and access on every one of these planning efforts.

The Sonoran Desert National Monument is currently in the scoping process with public meetings.

Lake Havasu has an improved scoping report and they are working on alternative formulations through the public process. Scheduled for April 2005.

Grand Canyon Parashant has been meeting with the community, park service and tribes. Cooperating agency invitation letters have been mailed all over the State, however, we have not received a lot of responses. The largest recommendation has been to leave the Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument alone and make no changes.

The Ironwood National Monument did their scoping process and has received 10,000 comments. Someone in the community figured out how to respond electronically so this is why so many comments were received.

We are close to resolving the protests regarding the Las Cienegas National Monument.

The fire plan amendment requires that all of our plans be updated for fire. The notice of intent has been approved and will be published in the National Register.

Regarding Game & Fish being involved in Southwest Strategy. There currently is a Game and Fish employee working in the BLM office who is working with us jointly on all plans statewide.

DISCUSSION:

Lamar Smith: Have you received comments from overseas?

Mike Taylor & Steve Gobat: Yes

Lamar Smith: Why are you receiving comments from people who are not citizens of the United States?

Deborah Stevens: All of the RAC has received a copy of the Arizona Planning Bulletin. This is a standard bulletin that will be generated at the field offices.

Frances Werner: The Prescott newspaper has been having articles about the Agua Fria National Monument.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: BLM Summary Report on Mohave Livestock Association Issues (Mike Taylor)

At the last meeting the Mohave Livestock Association (MLA) brought some issues to the RAC. John Christensen met with the MLA and we talked about the issues brought up at the RAC meeting. There is an obvious need for communication between the BLM and the MLA. I felt the meeting was productive and well received regarding specific issues.

DISCUSSION:

Norm Wallen: I am requesting clarification of RAC authority with respect to particular user complaints beyond hearing the complaint and requesting staff updates. Specifically, can the RAC do such things as conduct hearings, collect additional data or ask staff to do so? If so, does the RAC wish to have this as one of their functions? If so, I think criteria and general procedures need to be established rather than emerge in response to a specific complaint.

Mike Taylor: Members of the public (who the RAC represents) are fulfilling their role as a RAC member to make recommendations to the State Director. We have the public aspect of the RAC meetings where the public may attend and ask questions of the RAC and make recommendations. The RAC is playing the role that they are outlined to do. The RAC provides the public and the BLM a great service.

John Neal: After meeting with the State Director there was a meeting to look at some of the issues on the ranches.

Norm Wallen: Other than the fact that the people are talking should there be much concern in the RRT involvement?

Mike Taylor: The RRT issue is a great consideration to the RAC. There was some question to how a gather was conducted. The issues were discussed between the parties.

William Branan: We are looking at solutions to issues and as a RAC we are helping to prepare BLM with these issues. The BLM people are hardworking people. We are looking for solutions to support the environment and the BLM.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment Period

DISCUSSION: Charles Lange, President of the Mojave Livestock Assoc. In November we had a meeting with the State Director and Mike Taylor. We discussed the burro issue and other issues regarding the Kingman Field Office. We had a meeting with John Christensen the other day and we are in the process of getting these issues resolved. It was a good meeting and we thank the RAC for their involvement. There were questions about surcharges and partnerships with regards to grazing allotments.

ACTION: N/A

ITEM: BLM Field Managers Field Office Rangeland Resource Team Member Proposals

DISCUSSION:

Shela McFarlin: There have been questions on whether we would be coming out with nominations for the Las Cienegas RRT. Not today. We will keep the Tucson RRT and keep it separate from the Las Cienegas RRT.

Lamar Smith: Is Dr. George Ruyle still a member of the RRT? Yes

Deborah Stevens: We are looking of having RRT training separately in Lake Havasu City.

ACTION: N/A

BLM Field Manager Reports

Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting Arizona Strip Field Office Manager Report January 27, 2003

1. SUBJECT: Arizona Strip Planning Effort

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Arizona Strip Planning effort continues to progress. We are currently developing alternatives for the draft environmental impact statement. A number of other agencies have signed on as cooperating agencies and are taking an active role in this planning effort. These agencies include: the towns of Colorado City and Fredonia; Coconino and Mohave counties in Arizona; Kane and Washington counties in Utah; the Kaibab Paiute and Hopi tribes; Arizona Game and Fish Department; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and the Federal Transportation Administration. We are planning public meetings this spring in Flagstaff, Fredonia, Kingman, Mesquite and St. George to gather comments on draft alternatives. The draft EIS will be available for public comment in spring of 2004.

2. SUBJECT: California Condor Reintroduction

ISSUE SUMMARY: The California condor reintroduction effort continues to show promise despite continuing challenges. On January 18th the BLM transported eight California condors from the Peregrine Fund breeding facility in Idaho to acclimation pens atop the Vermilion Cliffs. They will be released into the wild in six to eight weeks. Three other condors were released in early December, bringing the total number of wild condors in Arizona to 33. The project faces challenges. Two condors were killed this summer in the Kaibab National Forest, leading U.S. Fish and Wildlife and others to offer a reward for information about their deaths. Also, lead poisoning from shot and bullets found in some carcasses that the condors feed on continues to be an issue. Last year two pairs of condors in Arizona and three pairs in California attempted to nest. While none of the nests were successful, biologists are optimistic for the coming breeding season. It takes condors six or seven years to reach breeding age, and many of the birds are just now that old. Biologists have already noted some breeding activity in the Grand Canyon. Partners on this project include the Peregrine Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department and Grand Canyon National Park

Kingman Field Office: No Report Submitted.

**Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Lake Havasu Field Office Manager Report
January 27, 2003**

1. SUBJECT: Underground Fuel Tank Contamination at Big Bend Resort

ISSUE SUMMARY: Extensive gasoline leaks from underground fuel tanks have heavily contaminated soil and groundwater adjacent to the Colorado River, and threatened the quality of drinking water and riparian habitat at the Big Bend Resort (a BLM concession lease). The California Regional Water Quality Control Board (CRWQCB) has issued a Cleanup and Abatement Order to BLM and the concession operator.

The extent of contamination and remedial cost estimates have been determined by the BLM contractor. A work plan has been approved by CRWQCB, and a Section 401 water quality permit has been issued. Application has been filed for a Section 404 Corps of Engineers permit. Remedial work began on November 6, 2002. An estimated 1,100 tons of contaminated soil will be removed, and an air sparging system will be installed. The cost of remediation is estimated at \$250,000 to \$450,000. BLM will continue to obtain funding and pursue cleanup at Big Bend.

2. SUBJECT: Lake Havasu Resource Management Plan (RMP) and EIS

ISSUE SUMMARY: LHFO RMP Scoping Report and first Planning Bulletin were printed and also published on the internet in December 2002. The Planning Bulletin was sent to contacts on the National Mail List, and is also being distributed through locations hosting upcoming RMP Open House meetings. The outreach meetings will provide additional opportunities for public comment on the RMP; they are scheduled for February 15 in Havasu Lake (CA), February 18 in Bullhead City, February 19 in Bouse and Brenda (two meetings), February 20 in Lake Havasu City, and February 24 in Parker. Copies of the Scoping Report are available from the field office or at any of the outreach meetings. Government agencies in the area were sent copies of the report in December.

The RMP/EIS planning effort is to be completed in-house due to budget constraints, however it is still lacking a full complement of team members 18 months after the initial effort began. Current staff includes the RMP Team Lead and a Recreation Planner. The wildlife biologist is expected to be on board by February, and a selection list for the GIS Specialist position has been received. Other needed positions (TDY or contract) include archeologist, writer/editor, lands specialist, fisheries biologist, and economist. The Draft RMP/Draft EIS are scheduled for completion in April 2004.

3. SUBJECT: Filming Permits

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Lake Havasu Field Office has recently been requested to process filming permits, as Lake Havasu City and the surrounding backcountry have become desired locations for film production companies. Permits have been issued to LLP Production Services, of Los Angeles, CA, for two made-for-television movies.

While the local tourism bureau is enthusiastic about the benefits of using the area for motion pictures, processing film permits is additional unanticipated workload accompanied by short and immediate

timeframes. More filming requests are anticipated and the field office will continue to expedite processing, as requested to promote the area and enhance the local economy and tourism.

4. SUBJECT: Fisheries Program

ISSUE SUMMARY: The BLM has led the diversified partnership to complete the \$28 million dollar fisheries improvement project on Lake Havasu since 1993. It was an ambitious 10-year goal-oriented partnership, supported by over 150,000 volunteer hours. Major accomplishments include 100% of program goal achievement in stocking the lake with 30,000 endangered, adult, razorback suckers, and placement of 875 acres of fish habitat into the lake. At this time 47% of the program goal has been achieved to place 30,000 endangered, adult, bonytail chub into the lake, and about two-thirds of the of free public access shoreline fishing facilities have been constructed. Through the end of 2002, the above achievements were accomplished with a total of \$13.8 million contributed by the partners.

The program economic analysis completed in 2001 documents recreational fishing at Lake Havasu contributes over \$66 million annually to the local economy. Since the fisheries program began, angler use days have increased from 48,000 to over 176,000 per year.

Transition efforts are currently underway to maintain project improvements for public safety, and to monitor results as a long-term measure of success. This portion of the program assures the public fishing access sites, restrooms, and trails remain safe for our public customers, and they continue to be satisfied with their fishing experiences. It also assures the habitat improvements do not degrade into navigational hazards for the busiest recreational reservoir in the Southwest. Monitoring efforts will assure this multi- agency partnership can quantify the sustained improvement to sport fishing in the long term, as we have witnessed over the short-term. Monitoring will also determine survival rates of the stocked endangered fish populations, which could dictate future development and operations on the lower Colorado River.

**Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Phoenix Field Office Manager Report
January 27, 2003**

1. SUBJECT: Seasonal Emergency Closure of Public Lands to Protect the Endangered Sonoran Pronghorn

ISSUE SUMMARY: On September 30, 2002, the BLM received U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Biological Opinion on grazing in the vicinity of Ajo, Arizona. The U.S. population of Sonoran Pronghorn has declined to approximately 21-33 animals. One of the conservation measures agreed to in the biological opinion was that the BLM would implement a seasonal (March 15 - July 15) emergency closure of public lands, and associated roads, trails, and camping areas to the general public. Authority for this emergency closure is 43 CFR 8364.1, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701). The closure is intended to reduce human disturbance to the endangered Sonoran Pronghorn. The closure will be effective for approximately 65,000 acres of public lands. The closure will not include the Darby Well Scenic Loop Road and the Chico Shunie Road. This closure will be monitored and enforced by the BLM.

2. SUBJECT: Sonoran Desert National Monument Planning and Scoping Schedule

ISSUE SUMMARY: We will be developing two Resource Management Plans, one for each of the planning areas. We will also be developing an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS will assess possible environmental, social, and economic effects of different management alternatives for public lands within the two planning areas.

**Phoenix South and Sonoran Desert National Monument
Tentative Planning Schedule**

Task	Begin Date	End Date
Hold Public Scoping Meetings	January 2003	March 2003
Issue Scoping Report, Public Review	May 2003	June 2003
Develop management alternatives - Public meetings	June 2003	November 2003
Develop Environmental Impact Statement	December 2003	May 2004
Issue Draft Plans, Draft EIS	July 2004	July 2004
Public review of draft - Public meetings	July 2004	September 2004
Prepare Proposed plans, final EIS	October 2004	May 2005
Issue Proposed plans, final EIS	June 2005	June 2005
Protest period, develop final plans	July 2005	November 2005
Issue final plans, Record of Decision	December 2005	December 2005

The Phoenix Field Office will be holding public scoping meetings to kick off the Phoenix South and Sonoran Desert National Monument planning efforts. Eleven scoping meetings will be held in February and early March, in Maricopa, Gila Bend, Casa Grande, Globe-Miami, Ajo, Sells, Tucson, Buckeye, Mesa, Phoenix, and Yuma. The meetings will be open house format and the public is invited to drop-in anytime. Scoping comments will be accepted through March 31, 2003. The news release and planning bulletin are being sent out in late January to provide ample public notice. Since we are awaiting the final appropriations bill for 2003, the schedule following the completion of the scoping meetings remains uncertain.

Scoping Open House Meeting Schedule

Monday, February 10, 6-8 pm – Maricopa
Maricopa Secondary School Cafeteria
45012 Honeycutt Avenue

Tuesday, February 11, 6-8 pm – Gila Bend
Gila Bend Community Center
202 North Euclid Street

Wednesday, February 12, 6-8 pm – Casa Grande
Parks & Recreation Office, Armadillo Room
404 East Florence Boulevard

Thursday, February 13, 6-8 pm – Globe-Miami
Globe High School Auditorium
455 North Willow

Tuesday, February 18, 6-8 pm – Ajo
Ajo Community Center
Bud Walker Park
290 5th Avenue

Wednesday, February 19, 2-4 pm – Sells
Sells Council Chambers
Tribal Headquarters

Thursday, February 20, 6-8 pm – Tucson
Arizona Game & Fish Department
555 North Greasewood Road

Monday, February 24, 6-8 pm – Buckeye
Buckeye Community Center
201 Centre Avenue

Tuesday, February 25, 6-8 pm – Mesa
Mesa Centennial Center, Apache Room
201 North Center Street

Thursday, February 27, 6-8 pm – Phoenix
BLM Phoenix Field Office
21605 North 7th Avenue

Thursday, March 6, 6-8 pm – Yuma
BLM Yuma Field Office
2555 East Gila Ridge Road

3. SUBJECT: Status of the Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Efforts

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Public Scoping period ended November 15, 2002 resulting in 364 oral comments and over 800 written letters, e-mails, and petitions totaling roughly 2400 individual comments. Our consultant, Jones and Stokes, in conjunction with our staff, has completed the scoping report describing public, other government agency, and BLM issues and concerns. The report will be released to the public upon approval by the State Director. We are also beginning to receive draft resource assessments from Jones and Stokes and other contractors that will provide technical support to alternative development, environmental impact analysis, and the content for the Affected Environment section of the EIS. We are currently reviewing those to be sure they are adequate to support EIS development. Finally, we have developed a strategy for citizen collaboration in development of our alternatives. We are currently scheduling three sets of meetings this spring for that purpose.

4. SUBJECT: Standards and Guides

ISSUE SUMMARY: The grazing decisions for the Cameron and other allotments in the Ajo block have been issued after considerable negotiation with the USF&WS on the Biological Opinion. The rangeland health evaluations for these allotments were a team effort between the State Office and the PFO staff. A number of opportunities were presented to the permit holders and the interested publics to review and comment on the final draft evaluation, which included a set of conservation measures approved by the USF&WS as part of the Section 7 consultation process. The field office is now in the

review period for the proposed decision. Protest and appeals are expected from the permit holders and some of the interested publics.

The field office will begin a number of S&G evaluations of allotments on the Sonoran Desert National Monument this spring. It is believed that these evaluations will bring considerable public interest since the monument proclamation called for the eventual closure of all allotments south of Interstate 8 to grazing and requires a determination of the suitability of grazing on the northern allotments given the designation of the area as a national monument.

5. SUBJECT: OHV Inventory and Route Designation Process for Planning Efforts

ISSUE SUMMARY: By Washington Office direction, all new resource management plans must contain a transportation and access component that specifies route designations (open, closed, limited) as part of the final plan. Considerable effort has been placed into enlisting the public in identifying, validating and providing user information on roads, routes and trails within the PFO planning area boundaries. We have established a decision tree process to determine what information from the public can be used to develop a range of alternatives for a transportation and access component to the plan. The public will be asked to provide their input as part of the alternative formulation meetings to be held in March and April of this year.

Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Safford Field Office Manager Report
January 27, 2003

- The Happy Camp Canyon Allotment (#5132) final decision is out. BLM received one protest on proposed decision, but resolved it with help of Arizona State Office and Solicitor and issued final. No appeal filed has been filed.
- BLM is working on the following allotments that expire in 2003. We will renew these allotments under the authority of Section 114 of Public Law 107-67 and follow-up with Standards and Guideline Evaluation this year.

#6052 The Divide, #6253 Jarvis Wash, #6098 Gravel Pit, #6008 Ramsey Slide
#4401 Muleshoe, #4402 Soza Mesa, #5067 High Lonesome, #5119 Flying W,
#5125 Roostercomb, #5130 Cement Canyon, and #5294 Red Bird Hills

- Reinitiating the community-based planning effort on Watson Wash Hot Well, which was started in 2000, but dropped due to numerous vacancies on staff. Marlo Draper, Planning and Environmental Coordinator is the contact .
- Completing an interpretive plan, including information signs, brochures and more for East end of Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness.
- Initiating the Aravaipa Watershed Assessment and Plan. This RMP decision identifies an interdisciplinary plan on the Aravaipa Watershed to be developed. The goal is to develop a plan that covers all issues in the Watershed; including updating the Aravaipa Wilderness Plan, plan for two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Standards and Guidelines Evaluation, Access, T&E, recreation and fire. BLM will be using The Nature Conservancy as a partner in the process. The first stage is the assessment followed by a community-based plan. This will be a 2-3 year effort depending upon funding.
- Continuation of the San Simon Watershed Assessment and Plan. BLM is working on the assessment of the San Simon River channel with the Gila Watershed Partnership, Bureau of Reclamation and University of Arizona, Office of Arid Lands Studies. The goal is to do an assessment and evaluation of the 80 years of watershed restoration in the watershed to determine current status of the watershed and river channel, what has worked and what has not worked. This evaluation will be the basis for developing a community-based plan that will replace the original San Simon Plan. There is an RMP decision to do this plan.
- T&E Fish Reintroduction in Aravaipa Watershed. Finalize NEPA for reintroduction and transplant the Gila Topminnow and Desert Pup Fish into selected site in the Aravaipa Watershed. This is a joint effort with AZ Game and Fish, Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy and Safford Field Office.

- Continue Cooperative Monitoring Effort with USFS, Safford Ranger District and University of Arizona, Cooperative Extension Service. Monitoring data is used for Standards and Guidelines Evaluations.
- The Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area Advisory Council is being re-chartered with the updated charter in the Secretary of Interior's Office waiting for approval. The nomination process should begin in the next several months. Due to terms of members having expired, terms now being staggered under the new charter, and new chartering language, all positions will be open for nominations.
- Trail work on the Midnight Canyon/Bonita Creek portion of the Safford -Morenci Historic Trail will begin at the end of January to allow for restoration and archeological excavation work on the Old Lady Gay Cabin on Bonita Creek. The restoration is being provided in partnership with the National Park Service and will include hazardous fuels removal from around the cabin area. Other sections of the Safford-Morenci trail are being considered for future rehabilitation and interpretive signing.
- Through a contract with the City of Safford, we are beginning a roads project to improve the Sanchez Road (West Entrance) into the Gila Box. The improvements call for enhancing public safety by redesigning the curves and slopes of the road. Three low water crossings will be added to prevent further road erosion. The improvements will provide easier access for horse and recreational trailers to Bonita Creek and Gila Box facilities.

**Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Tucson Field Office Manager Report
January 27, 2003**

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment and Remediation Plan for the Silver Bells (ASARCO) trespass in the Ironwood Forest National Monument

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the resolution of the ASARCO mine trespass in the Ironwood Forest National Monument is in draft form. The EA is under review by the ASARCO working group. The EA incorporates the recommendation for remedial action provided by the working group along with mitigation measures. Within the last six month, ASARCO has removed all chemicals from the trespass pipeline to avoid any possibility of contamination in the monument.

SUBJECT: OHV Issues in the Middle Gila Area

ISSUE SUMMARY: Concerns continue to be expressed by the public regarding OHV activity in the Middle Gila area. To clarify BLM policies and regulations, BLM Tucson has developed a consolidated response to these concerns, including Questions & Answers, and continues to meet with OHV groups. BLM Tucson is committed to a public process to evaluate the data in the road inventory. This will include work with the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership, interested publics, and the general public. When the evaluation of the inventory is completed, implementation may require a land use plan amendment or development of an EIS/RMP and a Biological Evaluation and Opinion from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service through an Endangered Species Act, Section 7 Consultation. Funding has been requested for this project.

SUBJECT: San Pedro Water Conservation Plan

ISSUE SUMMARY: The first edition of the San Pedro Water Conservation Plan is planned for release in March or April of 2003. The plan addresses the water issues in the Sierra Vista Sub-watershed, planning objectives, water supply and demand, water conservation strategies and preliminary recommendations. The plan documents the activities of the 20-agency partnership. The plan is a dynamic document – the next edition will include recommendations for implementation of specific activities that will result in reduced consumption, reclaiming or reusing water, and augmenting existing water resources. A new partnership website will also be launched within the next few months.

SUBJECT: Recreational Shooting in the Ironwood Forest National Monument and the Tucson Basin

ISSUE SUMMARY: The BLM Tucson Field Office continues to work with the Udall Center for Conflict Resolution to bring interested groups together to develop solutions to the recreational shooting issue; these may include a partial closure, education, or additional shooting ranges, among others. The BLM is concerned about the safety of residents and visitors to the area who are at risk from unsafe shooting practices. BLM has posted signs in the area with

safety messages for target shooters. The Tucson Field Office has also increased the number of law enforcement rangers patrolling the area, and they have issued several citations for creating a public hazard.

The Task Order for the contract with the Udall Center has been completed and is waiting approval. Following approval, a meeting will be scheduled with the Udall Center to develop a work plan.

SUBJECT: Record of Decision for Approved Resource Management Plan for Las Cienegas National Conservation Area

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Draft *Federal Register* Notice for the publication of the Record of Decision has been prepared. Publication will occur once the final resolution of the single protest received to the plan, along with the Record of Decision, is approved by the BLM Washington Office.

**Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Yuma Field Office Manager Report
January 27, 2003**

1. SUBJECT: Mittry Lake South Hazardous Fuels and Riparian Restoration Project

ISSUE SUMMARY: The “Mittry South” project is a cooperative effort between BLM Yuma Field Office Resource staff and the Lower Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Group. The project focuses on removing hazard fuels within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and improving wildlife habitat for several species of birds including the endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher. Mittry South is currently being mechanically cleared through contract. The biomass removed will be “chipped and shipped” for electrical power generation by Colmac Industries wood burning power plant facility, located in Mecca, California. After the project site is cleared, it will be engineered for supplemental irrigation with support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. It will then be planted with native vegetation such as mesquite, cottonwood and willow or with a cover crop to improve soil quality. The end result is to change the project site from a highly flammable exotic woodland into a fire resistant native plant community.

2. SUBJECT: Cibola Research Project

ISSUE SUMMARY: The “Cibola Project” is a collaborative effort between BLM Yuma Field Office, the Lower Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Group and the Bureau of Reclamation. The goal of the project is to determine suitable strategies for restoration of tamarisk infested floodplains. This research will be valuable in determining revegetation techniques following wildfire and hazard fuel reduction treatments. Currently the potential for recovery of desirable native vegetation in salt cedar stands is limited.

Techniques to improve habitat and reduce hazardous fuels include mechanical biomass reduction of salt cedar, soil microbial and nutrient regime manipulation, seedbed preparation, and individual species trials. Treatments would accomplish BLM goals and objectives including treating invasive species, encouraging habitat for endangered species, improving wildlife habitat and recreational potential, and reducing hazardous fire fuels.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Questions on Field Manager Reports (BLM Field Managers)

DISCUSSION:

Steve Saway: On the PFO report it talks about an emergency closure. Is there a map?

Don Charpio: Yes. Closed for camping and OHV in the Sonoran Pronghorn area, which is west of State Route 85. This is a seasonal closure from March 15-June 15, 2003. We still have to brief the State Director on this closure. We also will be meeting with the City of Ajo as we do the scoping process. We will keep the scenic loop open because it is a popular route to see the mines.

Rick Holloway: What is going on with the Horse & Burro issue?

John Christensen: We have not approached the new administration to see if they are agreeable to leasing or selling the land to us. We are at the end of our five-year lease and would like to stay there. We are

working with the State of Arizona regarding exchanging lands with the State. It will be a long-term purchase or an exchange.

Deborah Stevens: The new Governor representative to represent the State on the RAC is Lori Faeth.

Rick Holloway: What is your capacity on the area.

John Christensen: Right now there is a horse & burro capacity of 240. If we are going to play in the regional concept there needs to be at least 500 head. We have had a local meeting with the managers on the burro team and talked with the new administration to see if this facility is still necessary. I don't think this will be the case as the Kingman area is a good staging area, however, there is no money to build a new facility.

Frances Werner: What was the decision on the bighorn sheep translocation?

John Christensen: No decision had been made. This is a decision that will be made by the State Director and we have to brief her on the issues.

Frances Werner: Is this the larger project that dates back when the transplant was cancelled 2-3 years ago?

John Christensen: Yes, Game & Fish wanted to include predator control.

Steve Saway: Is there any information that the PFO can share with us regarding Veranda Properties?

MarLynn Spears: This issue has been tabled. Those lands are up for discussion and for the public to decide.

Steve Saway: It would have some distinct benefits in Southern Arizona.

Shela McFarlin: The lands in Southern Arizona are still on the table. We are currently putting together a land exchange proposal. What is being requested is property in Tucson that is slated for disposal. We are trying to match land values.

Sanford Cohn: The next step was to have those lands removed from the disposal process. How does this work?

MarLynn Spears: That decision has not been made, however, it is included in the planning process.

Sanford Cohn: In the past when these lands are taken off of the eligible lands for disposal list in the alternative strategically speaking will there be a plan for these lands to be a part of that? They have to be designated for some kind of other list (recreation or something).

MarLynn Spears: If the input indicates, the lands could go back to the general list.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Recreation and Tourism Working Group

(Sandee McCullen, Chair)

There are a couple of issues that we discussed this morning. Safford, I believe you have an agreement that you are working with the OHV clubs regarding Adopt-A-Trail issues? Kingman is this a verbal understanding? If there is an agreement, I would like a copy so we are all on the same page.

DISCUSSION:

Don Ellsworth: I do have an agreement in writing that I will send to you Sandee.

Sandee McCullen: The Arizona State Land Department is in the process of tying the monitoring program in with a BLM Adopt-A-Trail program. Do we want to pursue this and have an Adopt-A-Trail program to cover all Field Offices instead of separate agreements for each office? Even the Forest Service has an Adopt-A-Trail program. Now we have monitoring issues becoming involved in this stuff. If we could tie this in and have uniformity it would solve a lot of our problems.

Don Charpio: From a Field office standpoint we would like the flexibility to design a program with our needs. This would work best for the Field offices.

Mary Dahl: The reason for the agreement/partnership has been to implement a grant program. This served a specific issue to have an agreement in place and obtain a grant.

Sandee McCullen: Do you want this to be continued?

Mike Taylor: I am hearing that you have identified a need. You have identified work that is going on in different offices. What you are asking for is a BLM policy to cover all of the Arizona Field offices. There may very well be an easy way to provide templates, MOU's, etc.

Sandee McCullen: I read under the toolbox that we would publish a motorized OHV field guide.

Steve Saway: As part of the toolbox it needs to be clarified on how we inventory and how we adopt a trail.

Sanford Cohen: Instead of working with all these different groups separately they should be encouraged to work together towards the same result on a much broader scale.

Mike Taylor: This is one of things that we envisioned with the Agua Fria National Monument. This is a great idea.

Don Charpio: Administratively this makes sense.

Sandee McCullen: The next issue we were discussing was the PLIC (Public Lands Information Center). The PLIC has more than surpassed their goals and is being used by the OHV community. I talked with Don Charpio regarding letters from the OHV community on the scoping process. When we are working with the meeting hours for scoping meetings. I ask all of us to give everyone sufficient time to plan to attend these meetings. The PFO did an excellent job at the last scoping meeting in setting up a meeting time.

We are back to consistency and standardization, which was discussed with Mike Taylor this morning. We need to come up with a standard that everybody will use.

Sandee McCullen: Does everyone know what the decision tree is?

Mike Taylor: The decision tree was developed to bring people into the thought process. It's a type of flowchart. We thought this would be a good product to bring to the table in the planning efforts. To get everyone involved in the logical thought process. We brought the decision tree up and tested it at one of the Phoenix Field Office scoping meetings. For more detailed information on the decision tree we can ask Bill Gibson to make a presentation.

Frances Werner: Do I understand that it's the PFO that is piloting the decision tree process?

Mike Taylor: Yes

Tammy Pike: The Arizona State Lands Department (ASLD) is going to adopt this decision tree. The Forest Service is also going to adopt this process.

Norm Wallen: Can we get copies of this process?

Tammy Pike: Yes

Elaine Zielinski: I think the decision tree is a good process and should be sent to the RAC.

Tammy Pike: There will be a decision tree process procedure given at the Florence Town Hall on Wednesday, February 5, 2003.

Steve Saway: We are monitoring at the Recreation Land Use Plans for consistency across the board.

Glen Collins: Tammy mentioned that the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership is having a meeting next week on the decision tree and how it can be applied to our group for studying and planning analysis of the Middle Gila Conservation Area. I want to emphasize that this is a RAC initiated effort, which was started 2-1/2 years ago. Ken Baker (former RAC member) started meeting in Florence. He started a Friends of Martinez Canyon, an area that nobody seemed to pay much attention. We formed the MHCP and it has been meeting every month with 20-50 people. A lot of representatives from the ASLD attend, the County Supervisors of Pinal County, OHV people, etc. The ASLD has been paying for the distribution of minutes. We have taken the Martinez Canyon area as a pilot study. We will be applying the decision tree

method in the decision-making. We want to use this for multiple uses and assure reasonable access. The Tucson Field Office has been very helpful and involved. Tammy Pike is the sole representative of the ASLD. We have held public scoping meetings. Here we are making studies and making recommendations to the ASLD and the BLM. Before we get too far down the road we need to get the leadership of the Forest Service, ASLD and the two counties involved. We decided at the last meeting to ask Elaine Zielinski if the BLM would be willing to hold a meeting with representatives of the key state offices and get them together; and with the BLM's help we can brief them on what we are doing. Let the leadership catch up with the enthusiasm of the people who are attending the meetings. I sent an email to Elaine to outline what is involved. There are probably a number of different ways to do this and we ask for help of the BLM in getting these other agencies together.

Elaine Zielinski: I understand you talked about this with Mike Taylor. We have some ideas on how we can help to facilitate this and come up with suggestions.

Norm Wallen: Do you want any recommendations from the entire RAC?

MOTION: Norm Wallen moves that the RAC go on record as recommending to Elaine Zielinski that she follow through on the recommendations made in Glen Collin's letter. Seconded by Glen Collins. Voted and approved by the RAC.

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Wild Horse and Burro Working Group

(Lee Aitken, RAC)

I tried to see how the Wild Horse & Burro working group felt about State RACS introducing new types of programs with respect to the Wild Horse & Burro program. We are going to write a letter first, get on the agenda and show up for the next meeting. We are looking to discuss localized issues rather than national issues. I do not know any of these people that I have talked to. It will call for a face to face to let them know that there is a RAC in Arizona that would like some input on State issues. The next meeting will be in late February or early March.

DISCUSSION:

Rick Holloway: It seems that a lot of decision-making is made without the thoughts of the Kingman Field Office and their WH&B issues. This is an issue that will not go away so we will continue to participate.

Frances Werner: We have not been able to find out in a timely fashion when their meetings will be held. My contention is that the RACs in Nevada and other states might have good suggestions to help.

Mike Taylor: This is a BLM issue and we should be able to get the information for the RAC in a timely manner.

Frances Werner: You don't know if a meeting will be in your area until after the fact.

Glen Collins: Could this be a subject for discussion later and perhaps if we have members from a number of different RACs to attend these meetings?

Frances Werner: At the next meeting we need an opportunity to speak.

Mike Taylor: We will look into this matter right away.

Glen Collins: Sitting down with people face to face is much more successful. I never see the Advisory Board News Releases.

Frances Werner: Problems in the past were that they held meetings on seven days notice.

Lee Aitken: Regarding the State Lease Renewal.

Rick Holloway: We have talked about Joe Lane intervening on the H&B trespass.

Mike Taylor: We are trying to get a handle on the Kingman facilities problem. The attempt at this meeting was to outline the facility status (pros and cons) and take them to Washington to inform them of where we are so they can support us or decide if we need to be involved. If it is an important regional facility and the funding is there, then we need to decide where to put it. The State Land Commissioner has called and

asked to meet with and talk with Elaine. It sounds very much like they want to open the doors of communication with us.

Glen Collins: Too often I have found that these kinds of issues get caught up in other things. I would hope the burro issue would be kept separate from other issues.

Rick Holloway: It is a mutual problem. There have been numerous car accidents caused by burros in the Lake Havasu area. Not just the destruction of the land by the burros.

Lamar Smith: Does the Wild Horse & Burro act apply to State Forest Service land?

Mike Taylor: Yes

Lee Aitken: I will volunteer to work with the State Lands Department

Mike Taylor: Our staff will get with you when we are ready to discuss this matter.

Lee Aitken: This is the State land in Kingman and some day you may have to deal with this in another area.

Rick Holloway: We need to lay this out economically for them.

Glen Collins: I suggest you not go in and try to convince the State that they do this because they want something from the BLM. Lay the issues on the table and try to come up with an agreement.

Al Burch: On the budget and statues of the WH&B program (see handout). I also brought for you the latest newsletter that is issued by the BLM on the WH&B program. Regarding the budget, the appropriations bills have not been passed yet so we don't know for sure how the budget situation is. At this point we are going to get the WH&B program. Early in the program the WO was saying we would be approved for about 300 animals. Originally we wanted to meet our appropriate management level (AML) goals by 2004-2005. We were successful in lobbying with the Washington office to provide us enough funds to gather 500 animals, which is considerably better than 300 animals. We project with a 500 animal gather we will meet our goal by 2006. The budget right now is approx \$800,000 in the WH&B program. At this time last year we had about \$950,000 for the WH&B program. Our target for adoption this year is 350 animals. So far we have adopted 101 animals this year. The next adoption is scheduled for February 21-23, 2003 in Apache Junction. One other issue has come up. The Arizona Republic published an article a few days ago talking about a rancher who wants to open a sanctuary for wild horses and burros in Sonora, Mexico. As it turns out the location of the proposed Sanctuary is in the headwaters of the San Pedro. This has a lot of people concerned for the San Pedro. The proposal from May 2000 is being reviewed by the Office of the Solicitor in Washington to see if animals can legally be transferred from the United States to Sonora, Mexico. Because this is in the press you may hear many comments.

Steve Saway: The Sierra Vista Newspaper made it sound like this would be approved.

Al Burch: We specifically called Washington, D.C. to see if there has been any approval and no approval has been made. We have an obligation to protect these animals for a long time. If the Office of the Solicitor says that this is the legal thing to do then the State Lands Department and other agencies would have to be involved. This is only in its infancy and is currently being reviewed by the Office of the Solicitor.

Lamar Smith: What does the San Pedro have to do with this?

Shela McFarlin: This is a part of the watershed.

Al Burch: The proposal also includes grazing sheep and buffalo in the same area.

Frances Werner: The fellow who is promoting this cornered the RAC members at the RAC chair meeting.

Glen Collins: I doubt this will be approved because they didn't want the animals to leave the United States.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Standards & Guidelines Working Group

(Lamar Smith, RAC)

Somewhere in our directives it states that new members will be given these guidelines. I am hoping that there will be some BLM people at the training tomorrow so you understand what and why we have these guidelines. Even if you have previously been involved it sometimes helps to attend the training again. Other training sessions are scheduled for March, May, and another possibly in Lake Havasu City.

The rest of our discussion this morning centered around two items, both of which we were hoping would be agenda items for the next RAC meeting. Possible for training ranchers to be involved and accumulating more data. What is being done needs to be effective in the future. It was brought up that the Safford Field Office worked out an agreement with the Forest Service and Extension Service that they only monitor the process. We thought it would be good to have a presentation on this at the next RAC meeting. From what I hear, the BLM and Forest Service are both getting some good data. Maybe this concept should be used more extensively.

The new grazing regulations were also discussed. The details are not out officially. There will be a 60-day period for comments/suggestions. When we have our next meeting it will be close to the end of the 60-day comment session and we may want to discuss some of the issues at that time.

DISCUSSION:

Frances Werner: Lamar, I recall that you and Glen Collins volunteered to write a letter.

Lamar Smith: If a response is needed we still have time to send in a comment and add it to the agenda. Send the material to Frances and she can weigh what is incoming, if anything.

Deborah Stevens: There was an article in the Arizona Republic with regards to possibly purchasing back land grazing rights.

Lamar Smith: There are some interesting issues. When a ranch is purchased a grazing permit comes with the ranch. You can't purchase only a grazing permit. You purchase the property and receive the permit, which is transferred with the BLM policy that if you don't want to graze the property you sell it to someone who will graze.

Elaine Zielinski: We will try to sort this out and get you the best information that we can. Hopefully by the middle of February we will have more answers for you.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Public Relations Working Group

(Steve Saway, Chair)

Regarding the Public Relations Working Group. If you have anything you would like to highlight, please send me an email.

Report from Planning Working Group

(Mary Dahl, Chair)

(See handout)

Mary received a scholarship from BLM to attend Changes & Choices Collaborative Land Use Planning in the Southwest, which was held in Tucson last November. There were a lot of people in attendance from New Mexico. The presenters were very good at painting the picture for all of us on what is going on in the Southwest. Our BLM representatives, Beau McClure and Greg Simmons, will be putting together highlights that resulted from the convention.

I have passed out a handout on what was covered at this convention and also sent it to you by email.

DISCUSSION:

Shela McFarlin: On Las Cienegas we are at the last step and will send you the information once it is compiled.

Deborah Stevens: There were also some people who had not signed up for a planning team. This would be a good opportunity for the RAC members to sign up for a team.

Steve Saway: Mary, this was touched on at the last meeting and on the national broadcast. What you have done is excellent. We need the capability to share the information on the BLM website or by email so we can monitor what is going on and give advice on a case-by-case basis. Rather than wait until the last minute for information it would be nice to go to the BLM website for proposals. We may want to go beyond the proposals that are in the current draft.

Mike Taylor: We are trying to deal with this on a bureauwide basis. It would be nice for the RAC to have the ability to access information, briefing materials or scoping presentation reports that will be given to the State Director. This would enable the RAC to give comments or suggestions. It would be nice to be able to provide this to the RAC in an electronic format.

Elaine Zielinski: This will be good and clarifies the process.

ACTION: N/A**AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion on Future Meetings/Locations**

(Frances Werner, Chair)

See handout: Ground Rules (Black Mountain Interdisciplinary Rules)

Sanford Cohn: The main questions that I am hearing has to do with the particular wording on the signs regarding washes (OHV use is limited to existing or designated roads and trails), which seems incorrect as we have not yet completed the trail designation process. I am not talking about a trail that gets wider and wider due to mud. What I am taking about where the sign says that driving in the wash is permitted then how do you know which trail is a part of the wash? Are these people committing an offence by driving in a wash that is part of a corridor then as a single trail?

MarLynn Spears: We are open to your suggestions. It would be citable, however our intent is to work with the user. This may need to be clarified.

Mike Taylor: We ran into this issue when we started doing our informational meetings with regard to the Sonoran Desert National Monument (SDNM). It is caused by the language in the Sonoran Desert Resource Plan. How can you define which is the road and which is the process? We will go through the decision tree and the decision process; and in the interim we will have to use some common sense. We are going to work with people on this issue. Possibly this may be a topic to spend some time on during scoping meetings.

Sanford Cohn: Is it correct that the funding for the signs came from the Game and Fish Heritage Fund?

Mike Taylor: Yes

Frances Werner: It would be logical to put the signage under the recreation package.

Steve Saway: Regarding the energy rights-of-way this needs to be discussed. On the San Pedro, this year ends the prohibition on livestock grazing. What is the status?

Shela McFarlin: We will give you a report.

Frances Werner: Are there any thoughts about a meeting after the main meeting? We need to discuss when the main meeting will be held.

Deborah Stevens: Would you like to suggest a date?

Frances Werner: Towards the end of July or September.

Deborah Stevens: Typically we would have a June or July meeting and then an August meeting. Since you're having a meeting in May, maybe you would like to schedule one in late June or mid August.

Rick Holloway: How about July 9-11, 2003?

Frances Werner: A meeting will be held on July 10, 2003 in Phoenix and September 17-18, 2003 in Phoenix.

MEETING ADJOURNED